

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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ANGLICAN PRIMATES  
SUPPORT BISHOP TUTU

CANTERBURY, England -- Twenty-four primates of the Anglican Communion have signed a statement deplored the confiscation by the South African government of Bishop Desmond Tutu's passport, calling the action "seriously disturbing harrassment" of the Church leader.

The heads of 24 autonomous provinces of the 65 million member worldwide Anglican Communion, meeting here for the enthronement of the 102nd Archbishop of Canterbury on March 25, expressed their deep concern over the action of the South African government. Bishop Tutu's passport was lifted in early March shortly after he had expressed outrage at a 69-month prison sentence imposed on the Rev. David Russell for violating the terms of his banning order. Father Russell was banned because of his defiance of South Africa's apartheid laws.

The text of the primates' statement is as follows: "In our judgment no satisfactory explanation has been given and since Bishop Tutu has been charged with no crime, the confiscation of his passport must be seen as a seriously disturbing harassment of the South Africa Council of Churches. This we deplore and earnestly request that the bishop's passport be returned to enable him to continue his ecumenical work."

The Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, Presiding Bishop of the 3 million member U.S. Episcopal Church, was among those signing the statement. Bishop Allin had earlier expressed "great sorrow, regret and indignation" at the South African government's action against Bishop Tutu, who is former Bishop of Lesotho and is currently general secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches.

Also signing the statement were the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Robert A.K. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, and the Most Rev. Bill Burnett, Archbishop of South Africa. Bishop John Howe, secretary general of the London-based Anglican Consultative Council, though not a primate, also signed the statement.



The following Anglican prelates signed the statement: M. L. Loane, Australia; Edward W. Scott, Canada; Donald Arden, Central Africa; Gilbert Baker, Hong Kong, of the Holy Catholic Church in China; Basil Kuching, chairman of the Council of the Church in East Asia; Robert Runcie, England; Trevor Huddleston, Indian Ocean; John Armstrong, Ireland; Titus Nakamichi, Japan, acting primate; H.B. Dehqani-Tafti, Jerusalem and the Middle East; Norman Palmer, Melanesia; Timothy Olufosoye, Nigeria; David Hand, Papua New Guinea; Alastair Haggart, Scotland; Bill Burnett, South Africa; Douglas Mil-mine, representing the Presiding Bishop, South America; Elinana Ngalamu, Sudan; Musa Kahurananga, Tanzania; Silvanus Wani, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire; John M. Allin, U.S. Episcopal Church; Gwilym Williams, Wales; Moses Scott, West Africa; Cuthbert Woodroffe, West Indies; Bezaleri Ndahura, Archbishop-elect of Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire.

Bishop Allin has reported the receipt of a letter from U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, acknowledging a telegram from the Episcopal Church leader in early March concerning Bishop Tutu. Bishop Allin had asked the Secretary of State to protest the action of the South African government. Mr. Vance indicated that the U.S. Department of State had issued a public statement of protest, calling the South African action "unjust" and "unwise."

The secretary told the Presiding Bishop, "We fully intend to continue to make our views on this matter known to the South African government."

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